

February 20, 2019

Energy and Technology Committee

Re: Proposed HB 5002, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GREEN NEW DEAL

Co-Chairs Arconti and Needleman, Vice Chairs Fonfara and Allie-Brennan, Ranking Members Formica and Ferraro, and members of the Energy and Technology Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 5002, the Green New Deal. As you know, climate change threatens the existence of life on the planet. You now have an opportunity, and responsibility, to act to address this existential threat.

As each new scientific report comes out, we learn that the earth is in a more dire position than we previously thought. Scientists express concern that warming may be moving even faster than we know¹. Hence, even actions taken today are not likely to go far enough.

Last session, SB 7 was passed which required a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from 2001 levels by 2030. This sounded quite reasonable. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommended² in 2018 that reductions of 45% off 2010 levels were necessary to avoid catastrophic consequences. In Connecticut, 2001 emissions levels were approximately 20% higher than 2010 levels, and so, we are already behind target.

The point is this: we need to set goals today that seem out of reach in order to have a chance of making real change for the state, the country, and the planet. I urge you to target a 100% renewable energy goal by 2030, with a zero carbon goal from the state by 2040, or sooner. In addition, methane, the primary component of “natural” gas, is exceptionally dangerous to our atmosphere over the short run, at up to 100 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide³. We need to immediately shut down any further growth in the use of this gas and plan for the closing of power plants and pipelines using this fuel. All these goals would have the effect of beginning the essential transformation in our state. To reach these seemingly impossible goals we would need to begin today:

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07586-5#ref-CR10>; “Global warming will happen faster than we think”

² <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

³ <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2015/10/bridge-fuel-may-escalate-atmospheric-greenhouse-gas>

1. transforming our transit system to create clean mass transit available to all;
2. transforming our energy system to acquire all our electricity from clean renewable sources including wind and solar;
3. transforming our heating systems to eliminate all fossil fuels.

These changes would have many economic benefits for the state: thousands of well-paying jobs in the green industry, improved health outcomes and lower health costs from diminished pollution, better workforce retention and less absenteeism due to health problems, better school attendance due to reduced asthma events. In addition, these changes will help us keep us with our neighboring states and keep us competitive in attracting businesses and workers.

We have an opportunity to address another pressing need in the state by taking these actions, namely, addressing the severe inequality of our residents. Low-income communities and communities of color have experienced the brunt of the pollution and negative health outcomes. In addition, lack of adequate transportation affects the ability to obtain and retain employment and the ability to get well-paying jobs. These communities should be prioritized when making investments in renewable infrastructure and expanded clean transit. They should be prioritized in hiring for these new well-paying jobs. Raising up these communities benefits us all.

There are many good approaches to support these goals: restoring the raided rate payer funds to support energy efficiency and renewable energy; restoring net metering for solar; expanding offshore wind; minimizing methane leaks from existing pipelines; and more.

I hope that you will seriously consider the moment that we are in, and work to push strong climate legislation to address our existential threat. If not now, when? If not us, who?

Thank you for your attention.

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